

I would like to thank the outgoing executive, under the leadership of Miranda Grounds, for easing the transition of the present executive into their new role. Miranda generated a calendar of main events throughout the year that assisted us in meeting appropriate deadlines. We have added to this calendar. It will now warn of the difficulties in transferring power (in particular access to bank accounts) from one executive to the next – this can be a protracted and most tedious bureaucratic affair.

The new executive has introduced several changes that members should be made aware of.

- (1) The publication dates for the newsletters have been changed so that they will be more functional. The planned deadlines are now March 1 (for membership renewals on March 31), June 1 (for conference abstracts on July 12) and November 15 (to report on the conference).
- (2) These newsletters now include a new section on State News which will ensure State Representatives are keeping their members as well as the whole country and New Zealand abreast of the latest news. The last issue of the newsletter saw columns from South Australia, Victoria and Queensland – I would strongly encourage other representatives to submit articles in the future.
- (3) Another initiative will be to introduce a section on news from the Presidents of other societies and on profiles of institutes – I am currently negotiating with several people to begin this series.
- (4) The WWW homepage for the Society has been modernized and is now user-friendly. This site is being maintained by Dominic Ng in Western Australia and I would like to express my gratitude and thanks for a job well done. The constitution of the Society can be downloaded from the webpage and I recommend that people take the time to read it. We are currently trying to collate passed motions from previous AGMs and executives to complement the constitution. The webpage also had a direct link to the annual conference home page and a list of members of the Society can be obtained after an application for a password has been approved. The webpage also has a convenient link to interesting biology web sites and journal homepages. I also encourage people to use the Jobs link and to advertise their vacant positions on the web, particularly since advertising in the print media is now so expensive. In fact, this site could complement newspaper advertisements and contain detailed information for potential applicants. At present I maintain an email list of all members of the Society and would be happy to send a bulletin out regarding a job listing on our webpage.
- (5) As the treasurer will point out in his report, the Society has a healthy membership of ~200. However, we experienced a dramatic decline in corporate membership which may have been associated with a blurring of the individuality of societies following the merging of annual conferences. I congratulate our Treasurer James St John for instigating a plan to rectify this matter which he will outline in his report to the AGM.

Before my term of President ends next year, I am determined to ensure that the Society has a new logo to take us in to the next millennium. This logo should be representative of our interests in both cell and developmental biology and it should be very distinctive and clearly meaningful. I have already communicated with several people regarding possible designs and I welcome and suggestions. I propose to present a new logo for approval to the executive within the next year so that it can be operational by the next AGM.

The Society is clearly strong in both membership and in funds. I would encourage the Society to use this strong base to fulfil one of its principal aims as outlined in the constitution, that is, to advance research and education in cell and developmental biology. I will be striving to see that the Society has a more public image in promoting education and research. As a first step, I would like two of our members to attend the November 24th “Science meets Parliament” day in Canberra that has been organized by FASTS. I would like to extend a vote of thanks to Peter French who has worked tirelessly on behalf of the Society as a member of the FASTS board. I recommend all to read the FASTS Occasional Paper Series on “Biotechnology in Australia” prepared by Peter. As many of you are aware Peter French was a Past-president of this Society and it is a pleasure to see that old Presidents don’t die.

I would like to thank Professor David James, who together with Peter Koopman and Alpha Yap, as well as many others, have worked hard to make the Combio 99 conference a great success. The Society has come a

long way in the last five years with regards to its annual conference. We have evolved from staging a small meeting dedicated to a single theme to a very large joint conference that spans that interest of four different Australian and New Zealand Societies. I personally support this evolution and hope that we can continue this trend in the future. I would like to see that the Combio concept is adopted as the standard format, rotating between a limited number of venues. This will take a considerable degree of foresight on behalf of several societies but will be beneficial to all in the long term.

Finally I take this opportunity to point out, particularly to our younger member, that cell and developmental biology is slowly replacing molecular biology as the new hope for therapeutic treatments of diseases. Where there was once only the hope of molecules there is now the hope of cells and tissues. For instance, cloning, stem cell biology and tissue engineering have created enormous therapeutic interest. Our Society should be playing an important role in ensuring that the Australian community is provided with up-to-date information on both the meanings and implications of basic and applied research in cell and developmental biology. Initially this could be achieved by adding links on our homepage to appropriate scientific web sites. Ultimately we should be committing funds towards workshops to discuss important issues arising out of research with a view to writing our own position statements and making these available to the media.

Brian Key

President, Australian and New Zealand Society for Cell and Developmental Biology Incorporated
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